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843 842 ***Pregnancy and childbirth.*** An event of the first importance in the Yao world is the first conception or rather the "quickening" with the first child, *Litiwo*; this is described below, together with the other ceremonies of the *Unyago*.[1] After the ceremony of *Litiwo*, the period of waiting until the birth of the child passes without further event. A point of medical interest is that native women suffer in many cases from "morning sickness" during pregnancy. That they may have perverted appetites is also recognised, grain husks and crabs being among the things most commonly desired. As the Anyanja,[2] the Yao believe that the child develops from the semen of the male, although the growth of the child is in some way connected with the mother.

844 When labor commences, the woman retires to the bush a few hundred yards away from her house, attended by some friend, seldom a midwife, and never by her own people, though the mother and the mother-in-law will probably be near the spot. If labor is not completed by evening, they return to the house and the birth may take place actually within its walls. The attitude assumed in labor is the same as that adopted by the Anyanja,[3] the patient semi-reclining in the arms of another woman who sits behind, grasping her belly. The vulva is smeared with a decoction made from the bark of the *mpoza* tree as a lubricant, but no other help is given. *Kumkuli* is the name given to the place of confinement; *m'huli* means the house where the woman remains for a period after the confinement. The Yao recognise the protruding bag of amniotic fluid and call it the "oil-gourd". "*Chisasi chikasicha?* (The oil-gourd, has it broken?)." They wait until the placenta is delivered before dividing the cord. This is done with the sharp edge of the outer covering of a maize stalk or sugar cane; a knife is never used. The section is made near the placenta or half-way between it and the child, after tying the proximal end with a bark string.

The woman who receives the child at birth is the *ambusanga*, friend or godmother. If the infant is born in the bush, she carries it back to the house whither they go as soon as labor is completed. The mother herself, unless she is very ill, goes out shortly afterwards and buries the placenta in the ash-heap, using a stick to dig the hole, never a hoe.

845 After the birth, the mother and child must remain in the house until the umbilical cord separates, during which time the husband does not enter, though he may come to the door to look in at the child.

852 553 302 The day on which exit from the house is made, the floor is entirely replastered with mud. The baby's head is shaved and a cross is made upon it with *nguma*, a kind of red pigment. The husband may then receive the child and in the case of a first-born, it is he who gives it its name; other children may be named by the *ambusanga*, the mother, or the aunt.

When the mother leaves the house to appear in public, the *nakunga* who put her *litiwo* on,[4] removes it.

So long as the infant remains in the house, care must be taken as to persons allowed to handle it. A woman who has recently had a menstrual period or coitus with her husband,

[1] Vide infra, p. 274. [2] Stannus, op. cit., p. 310. [3] Ibid. [4] Vide infra, p. 274.

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then listens to an account of the circumstances attending the illness and death. The point at issue is whether there is any evidence pointing to death from unnatural causes which requires consulting a diviner. The chief practically always agrees with the relatives, and it is said that he will never press them to go to the *wachisanga* unnecessarily. The case may end with this conference, or here may begin the long series of events described under *usavi*.[1]

During the month subsequent to the funeral, certain taboos have to be observed. The widow may not bathe, and with the exception of the *awilo*, all who attended must refrain from sexual intercourse. At the expiration of this period, beer is brewed in the village, and all the friends and relatives are again summoned. This beer-drinking is called "the beer of rottenness," or "the beer of resignation." In addition to the beer, food is provided, and everyone helps himself without ceremony. *Chindimba* is sung and danced and at the present day, bands of trained dancers attend, including *ching'wenyeng' wenye*.[2] A pot of beer is sunk into the ground, marking the site of the dead man's house. The night of *matapata*[3] sees husbands and wives reunited, and the widow may go through ceremonial intercourse with a man appointed for the purpose called *litunu* or *mbilo*. Sometimes the widow refuses *litunu*, and is given medicine instead to cleanse her; her body is then no longer "hot" and likely to bring disease to those about her. A widow does not marry again for two or three years. A young man who loses his wife has no longer any standing in her village after *matapata*. He is usually given a present, with the suggestion that he go elsewhere. After the death of an infant, the mother is considered unclean. She sleeps on a mat apart from her husband till after the ceremony of shaving, and then undergoes a ceremonial coitus with her husband — in which case he is called *litunu* — after which, ordinary cohabitation is resumed. If she has been a widow, or if the child was born "with disease,"[4] another man acts as *litunu*.

The morning following *matapata*, all the fires in the village are extinguished. A fresh blaze is then kindled with the fire-drill, *lumangu*, either in the chief's house or in some spot nearby, and from there, fire is carried to all the houses. The ashes of the old fires, the stones supporting the cooking pots, and the porridge sticks are taken to the cross-roads, and there destroyed. Everyone then shaves all his own hair, head, axillae, and pubis.[5] The custom of the second shaving by the *awilo*, described in *Africana*,[6] is, I think, an adaptation from the Anyanja. A year later, beer is again brewed, and all the relatives summoned to the village to partake of it. There is dancing, but no ceremony.

The Yao bury their dead in regular graveyards in wooded country, the thicker the forest the better, often two or three miles away from a group of villages. Different villages bury their dead in different parts of the burial ground; relatives are usually buried near one another. Graves are never revisited, and no one would enter a graveyard except at the time of a funeral, and then only after obtaining permission from the chief. Such spots are

[1] Vide infra, p. 396.
[2] Beer-drinking.
[3] Macdonald, op. cit., p. 111.
[4] Vide infra, p. 370 and Pl. I.
[5] Vide infra, p. 396.

881 533 539 "*Tinganinde nnunungu ku Lupundu, pinga ujo'yu kundenda nungungu!*"
"I will go and bring my child to *Lupundu*, when I am going home I feel nervous!"

and running round he seizes hold of one of the *wali* and makes him sit down at *Lupundu*, continuing this until he has placed them all in a circle round *Lupundu*. He then sings a song about the little basket which the chief sent him containing the remains of the *mbepesi* flour:

"*Kasala nupusa akwesilinje, unyale mbwenunda, anuna!*"
"Little basket the owner asks for it back, give me home, mother!"

His wife who has been waiting in his hut nearby brings him the basket. Holding it in his hands, he prays to the spirits of his ancestors and all the previous medicine-men to whom his medicine-talis have belonged, invoking their aid that the ceremonies may go well.

Still holding the basket he begins to dance, singing:

"*Apatale mbepesi jisu!*"
"Let them (us) smear flour their (Let us baptize them!)"

and dipping his right elbow into the basket he smears each *mwali* on the forehead with the *mbepesi* flour. He then goes into his hut and fetches a bundle of powdered roots (which no woman may touch), medicine called *mitibulo*, that is, a medicine used for its aphrodisiac properties. Holding the medicine between the palms of his uplifted hands, he starts singing:

"*Kulwanunga kuchipopola, kwalunga mbuna!*"
"I cannot find out how to untie this, we tied (with) my brother-in-law!"

He is immediately surrounded by his assistants and the drummers, who dance round him, all holding their hands about his own, after which he unfastens the bundle of medicine and puts a little on the tongue of each *mwali*, beginning with the leader. He then takes some sweet-beer made by the chief's wife and pouring it into his old medicine-gourd, he mixes in some *mitibulo* and gives some to each *mwali* to drink after which he sings:

"*Amwala,*[1] *amwala mwanje wa imanga, chakulya mwadwala*
"You have drunk a mixture of water and maize flour, of eating eggs
achilacha panapano, Amwala, amwala ndwalila mukuwa;
you stop now, you have drunk (but) I have passed water (in it);
wati(ji) halumuka!"
you thought to be clever!"

[300] Next he goes into his hut with the small basket containing the *mbepesi* and paints his assistant with the flour, a semicircle round the forehead, a line down the middle of the face, a band across the chest, a line down each arm with rings round the arms and forearms, and a line down the middle of the back. They go out again into the ring and while the *n'michilo* sings:

[1] This may be a reference to *amwali*, the mortified sap.

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(fig. 14), and an antelope from Mpesa's in Zomba district (fig. 11), also two birds at Pikani's which I should think represent a fowl and a crow (figs. 12, 13). It is interesting to compare these attempts which show a natural feeling for shape, with others, the work of an Angoni youth in touch with a European mission station, who depicts the missionary, his donkey, his dog, and a chair but with little or no sense of form. Note the dots above the animals' backs which represent their feet seen from the other side (Pl. XVIII, figs. 15–18).

The models of animals and other objects made in relief on the ground at *Lupanda*, and of animals in grass and bamboo at *Chiputa*, are referred to under *Initiation Ceremonies*.

Decoration is limited to the making of patterns of geometric design on many household articles. The graving of pots is mentioned under *Pottery:* gourd vessels sometimes have lines and triangles cut on the surface; ivory knife handles may have concentric circles graven on them, the same being true of ivory nose-rings and necklaces. Spear handles and walking sticks, snuff-boxes, pipes, the head-rest and the necks of musical instruments too, are commonly engraved with designs. The wooden rim of the *ntumpwi* basket is always so treated. A series of these designs from baskets is reproduced (Pl. XVII). Occasionally geometric patterns are painted on the walls of huts. The best example I have seen is shown in the photograph which represents a Mohammedan mosque in South Nyasa district. This, I think, gives the key to the origin of these geometric patterns, namely, Swahili influence among the Yao (Pl. IV, fig. 1).

Personal ornamentation. The skin color admired most among the Yao is a rich brown and is likened to the color of the milliped, *kjongolo*. A very black skin is not liked and a man is said to be "as black as a crow." Very light colored skins are equally distasteful to some and considered to resemble the color of a roasted crab. The hair should be jet black. Young men anoint their heads with a decoction of *namalenga* pods in boiling oil to make the hair black and lustrous. When the hair is turning white, a substance made of the charred roots of a plant called *chisinje* is put on to make it black.

Natives recognize that some among them have red hairs on their heads or in their beards, and such a man is called *matwana*, *matwana* being the name of a caterpillar which lives on the *mtwana* tree and is covered with long red hairs.

The old men used to wear wigs, *chisindi*, made of knotted string blackened and oiled to look like hair; the women wore one called *chilwana*. These were used to disguise grayness or baldness.

The women sometimes let the hair grow long and then thread beads on wisps of it. This fashion is called *chilunga*. The large red bead, *chilolelo*, is now used for the purpose. This fashion was adopted by the old women and those in charge of the *Chiputa* ceremony. Strings of beads threaded on the hair falling down round the head are called *likwabola* or *makwabola* (plur.). Women sometimes thread beads on the crest of hair called *nchacha*. Ordinarily the hair is periodically shaved or sometimes cut with a knife, but the process is painful and therefore unpopular.

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302 Shaving is a rite practised in mourning.[1] Some old men and women, especially medicine men, make a practice of never cutting the hair and never washing it (Pl. VII, fig. 8). One occasionally sees lunatics with very long hair in the villages.

The Yao do not follow the Angoni practice of tying up into tags the hair which has been allowed to grow long with palm leaf string, but they sometimes tie up a single wisp and make it up with medicine; this is called *luchembi* or *ajembi* (plur.).

The scalp may be shaved in various fashions. Among men, it is quite common to trim the hair on the forehead, *ku-ajikila;* they must not, however, trim the hair behind (Pl. XVIII, fig. 2). Women, on the contrary, trim both in front and back; a man doing so would be laughed at. A woman for the ceremony of *Litiwo* shaves the front hair a little higher still, but she must be careful not to do so at other times, otherwise she would make herself a laughing stock (Pl. XVIII, fig. 10). The hair is sometimes shaved on either side of the midline in front, in imitation of temporal baldness; both baldness and this method of shaving are called *mazwezwe* (Pl. XVIII, fig. 4). Or again, among old Yao men the crown is shaved; this and natural baldness are called *lulasi* (Pl. XVIII, fig. 5). It is a fashion much affected by old men and great annoyance is caused them by any young upstart who does the same. Other methods include for men *mpila*, "a rat's path," an antero-posterior median line shaved (Pl. XVIII, fig. 9); *ingolongandinje*, two shaved lines made from back to front on either side of the head (Pl. XVIII, fig. 3); for men and women, *kpwandaliwila*, "the garden is (dead) overgrown", one lateral half of the head shaved (Pl. XVIII, fig. 7); for men, *nchuchu* a crest of hair left along the mid-line, both sides of the head being shaved (Pl. XVIII, fig. 8); *mwezi* (*chilemba cha mwezi*), "the moon," a crescent shaped area shaved on one or both sides of the head (Pl. XVIII, fig. 6).

The eyebrows and eyelashes are always left to grow normally among the Yao.

The Yao man used to take great pride in his beard; it was the object of a good deal of washing and combing. It grew to considerable length and was not cut or trimmed, but the hair growing down low over the throat was shaved, as was also the hair immediately below the mouth on the under lip and the moustache, as it was thought to get in the way when drinking. The whiskers were allowed to grow like the beard.

832 435 Hair on the chin or upper lip of a woman is rarely seen and on account of its rarity is much prized. Such hairs have a monetary value for making medicines, a single hair being sold for eight yards of calico or two shillings. Body hair is considered to be a sign of strength; on the chest, it is known as *chanpulama* (*ku-chanpulama*, to be strong). Body hair including hair on the back is by no means as rare as has been supposed. Sir H. H. Johnston says that he has never seen it,[2] a statement which shows lack of observation. The hair on the forearms and thighs is called *chenje* or *chembembe;* Hetherwick translates this word,[3] I think wrongly, as hair on the body. Body hair is never removed in any way. A man named Katumbisi (" the little vulture ") of Ulumba had a very large amount of body hair; he was likened to a baboon and was a source of much interest to the children who saw him.

[1] Vide supra, p. 244. [2] British Central Africa, op. cit., p. 398. [3] Op. cit., p. 111.

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The hair of the axilla is always removed in men and women, usually by shaving but sometimes in the case of women it is dealt with as in the case of the pubic hair. A man with unshaven axillae would be laughed at and referred to as "a man carrying a fowl in his armpit." The axillary hairs are called *mandenge pa munyunga* (*nyunga*, the armpit). 302

The pubic hair, *mandenge*, is removed by both men and women; in men by shaving, in women sometimes by shaving, but preferably by plucking out after the application of a medicine called *mesemandenge* (*ku-esesa*, to pluck a fowl), which renders the operation easy. It is prepared from the juice which exudes from the bruised bark of the *mesa-mandenge* tree. There is a woman at Malemya's who has never grown any axillary or pubic hair; she is called "the rogue elephant"; a rogue elephant has no tusks. It may be noted in passing that the woman has borne children. [824]

A few men have the hair round the anus shaved. Such a service can only be asked of a man's closest intimate, such as a brother-in-law. [607]

I have dealt with tattooing among the Yao in an article, as yet unpublished, on tattooing among the natives of Nyasaland.

The teeth among the Yao proper are never mutilated in any way, though the Amangoche go in for small file marks at the cutting edges of the incisors. 304

The old Yao women, of whom some may still be seen, used to pierce the upper lip and wear a circular disc of wood often two inches in diameter in the hole; this is called *lupelele* (Pl. VII, fig. 4). The disc was often made of lead and sometimes of ivory. The lead might be hollowed out on the upper surface; it was then called *lupelele lua utuli*. The disc caused a considerable projection of the upper lip which was much admired. A man, on the other hand, with protruding lips would be nicknamed "the warthog," *namungindu*, and considered ill favored. 304 301 [832]

This *lupelele* fashion has gone out and of later years the *chipini* or disc worn in the left ala of the nose has become more and more fashionable (Pl. II, fig. 2). Originally the *chipini* consisted of a small disc of lead not larger than a three-penny piece, which lay on the outer surface of the ala, held in place by a stem, *luchinji*, which pierced the ala and passed into the nostril. Now the fashion is to wear a very large disc, often an inch in diameter, which itself occupies a hole in the substance of the ala of the nose; it may be flat-topped and called *chipini cha utenga* ("mushroom"), or the upper surface may often be concave, in which case it is called *chipini cha utuli* (*lituli*, a grain mortar). These disks are made of lead and are sometimes called *lidini*, a recent word and doubtless a corruption of "lead." Others are made of ivory, which may bear some geometric pattern on the exposed surface. A *chipini* used to cost a fowl.

Among Yao men and women, the lobule of the ear is often pierced but nothing is worn in the hole except possibly a stalk of grass.

Combs for use and for ornament are worn in the hair by both men and women. The ordinary comb without decoration is called *likuwebepa;* it is made of a number of pieces 301

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301 of bamboo fastened together at one end on the flat side by binding with string, the free ends being sharpened to form the teeth of the comb. If the fastened end is ornamented with beads sewed on in patterns, the comb is called *lisesulo* (*ku-sesula*, to comb). *Lisesulo lia*

[824] *chinyambata* from *ku-nyambata*, to be sticky, is the name of a small comb worn purely for ornament. On either side of the base of this comb, pieces of wood variously shaped are glued with the sticky juice from the root of the *chinyambata* tree. In this way, a sort of inlay is produced. Pieces of tin cans are sometimes substituted for wood. Women occasionally wear in their hair the small *chisondo* knife used for tattooing and shaving.

302 The native takes readily to perfumes of European introduction, but previously he was

[177] not an entire stranger to the use of such essences. *Mboka*, the bulbous root of a kind of grass which grows near water, contains some aromatic principle which has a pleasant odor. The stem is bent around and fixed into the bulb; this is then covered with beads and slung around the neck. *Mkungwe*, the Mlanje cedar, is also used, as well as the fruit of a shrub called *chiungwe*. These substances are scraped into the castor oil used for anointing, and give it a pleasant odor.

No pigments are used on the body. As a sign of great rejoicing, the head and face and perhaps the whole body are covered with ashes, but the natives do not even paint the face with flour on ceremonial occasions.

303 Bands of beadwork are worn around the head, either as a simple band or a band finished off with a bunch in one spot, or with a tassel. Finger rings are worn made of ivory, eland hoof and horn, lead, and iron wire. There is also a great variety of bracelets and anklets, a list of which is given below.

Chigumbe: made of plaited grass, worn chiefly by little girls and women who cannot afford more expensive bracelets. As many as half a dozen may be worn on the wrist.

Likangala (pl. *makangala*): single circles of solid brass, one half to three quarters of an inch in diameter, worn by women usually as anklets, one or two on each limb. They may still be seen on some of the old women, but as they cause much discomfort, they have gone out of fashion. A man used to be very proud to see his wife adorned with so much wealth and she was content to be so hobbled by her vanity. The hammering up and pulling open of the *likangala* circle in order to remove it cost a fowl.

Chikungu: a brass bracelet of small calibre; *ikungu* (pl.) signifies a spiral cylinder made from the same thick brass wire covering the entire forearm.

Likwinjili: like *chikungu* of thin brass or iron wire, worn on arms and ankles.

Ching'anda: a bracelet of fine brass wire wound round a circular core. All the brass comes from the coast.

Likosa: a large ivory bracelet worn by men and women.

[237] *Uhanga:* ("stiff tail hairs of an animal"), the bracelet made of the tail hairs of the elephant or the gnu.

Licheka: the bracelet made from elephant hoof.

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1. YAO MAN WEARING HEADCLOTH COAST FASHION

2. THE SAME IN PROFILE

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● 302

3. AN OLD NATIVE WHO HAS ALLOWED HIS HAIR TO GROW LONG

4. AN OLD WOMAN, SHOWING THE *mpiki* WORN IN THE UPPER LIP

[End Plate 7]

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1. Native painting on the outside of a hut wall

2. A Yao native

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3. Machinga Yao youth

4. Machinga Yao youth, showing low growth of hair on the forehead

[End Plate 8]

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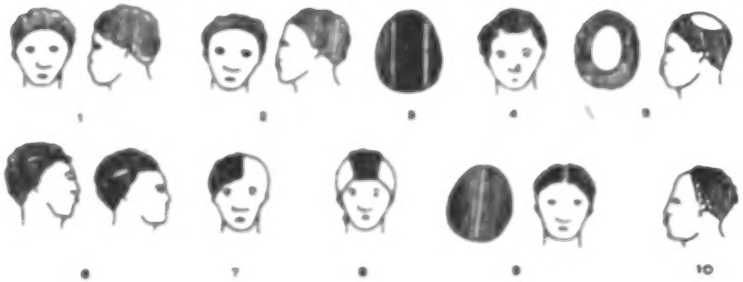

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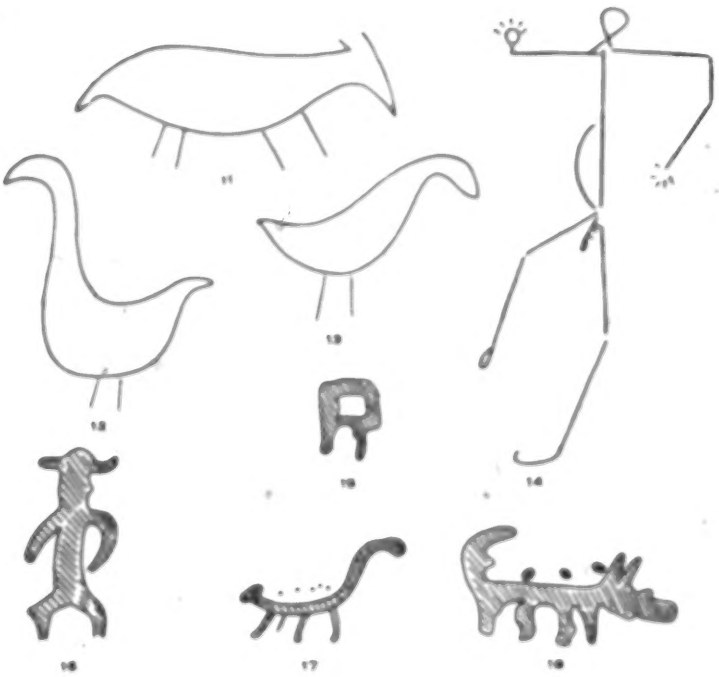

[End Plate 18]